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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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IL Department on Aging Assists Seniors during Medicare Open Enrollment *Free help available via Senior Health Insurance Program (SHIP)*

Springfield, IL – The Illinois Department on Aging's (IDoA) Senior Health Insurance Program (SHIP) is reminding seniors of the free counseling assistance available to Medicare-eligible individuals and their caregivers during the annual Medicare Open Enrollment occurring October 15th through December 7th.

During open enrollment, eligible adults can adjust Medicare Advantage or Medicare prescription drug coverage, move from original Medicare to a Medicare Advantage plan - or vice versa - switch between Medicare Advantage plans, join a Medicare Prescription Drug Plan, or switch or drop existing drug plans without penalty; all of which can be overwhelming and confusing.

There are 2,232,296 beneficiaries in Illinois enrolled in Medicare, and the average monthly Medicare Advantage premium changed from \$20.17 in 2019 to \$18.49 in 2020. With over 300 SHIP offices across Illinois, the agency stands ready to refer clients to their closest site, which can schedule an appointment to assist with open enrollment.

"There are 126 Medicare Advantage plans available, and 28 stand-alone Part D Prescription drug plans. Don't assume your current coverage is still your best choice. You may find better coverage, extra benefits or lower costs," said Paula Basta, Director of IDoA. "I encourage seniors to make an appointment at their earliest convenience. Our SHIP counselors are ready to help you make sense of the complicated Medicare system and to make the best choices for your healthcare as we prioritize planning for tomorrow."

New this year is the use of the MyMedicare.gov system to help seniors and people with disabilities make the best choices for their individual situation. Our SHIP counselors are ready to take your call and assist you.

Contact SHIP, by calling 1-800-252-8966, weekdays 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. For more information about SHIP, including a list of SHIP locations, visit the website at: <http://www.illinois.gov/aging/ship/Pages/default.aspx>.

To compare 2020 drug and health plans on your own and to find out more about Medicare options, visit the federal Medicare website at: www.medicare.gov. Medicare customer service representatives are available 24/7 at: 1-800-633-4227.

SHIP is not affiliated with any insurance company, and counselors do not sell or solicit any type of insurance. SHIP counselors in the field help seniors and people with disabilities on Medicare understand the options available to them. They also educate and answer questions about Medicare plans and options.

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Respect for yesterday. Support for today. Planning for tomorrow.
www.illinois.gov/aging

The Illinois Department on Aging does not discriminate in admission to programs or treatment of employment in programs or activities in compliance with appropriate State and Federal statutes. If you feel you have been discriminated against, call the Senior Helpline at 1-800-252-8966; 1-888-206-1327 (TTY)